

"Piece By Piece -- Judea!"

Text: Mark 10:6-9, "But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they two shall be one flesh; so then they are no more two, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Scripture: Mark 10:1-12

Jesus in His southward journey toward Jerusalem is once again on very familiar soil. In our Scripture it states that He is in ~~Judea~~ the borders of Judea. Now Judea was the southernmost ~~province~~ of the three divisions of the Roman province of Western Palestine. Judea was named after the tribe of Judah and was the territory ~~of the tribe~~ in which the tribe of Judah lived. It was a very small area about 55 miles long and 55 miles wide. Yet it played a very important part in Jesus' life. He was born there, He was baptized there, He faced the temptations there, had a goodly portion of His public ministry there, was betrayed there, had His trial there, faced the crucifixion there, and lastly it was the scene of His resurrection. Thus we can see that Judea played a very important role in the life of Jesus.

~~Our Scripture for today deals with the subject~~

And we shall see yet another important phase of Jesus ministry there as we look at the Scripture for today.

(Illustration of husband and wife not getting along and calling the minister in)
A certain couple were having marital difficulties and they asked their minister to call. During the course of the evening he remarked, "Just look at your cat and dog lying there so peacefully side by side before the fire. They are not fighting and squabbling even though they do not see eye to eye on everything. "Yeah, I guess your right ~~Reverend~~ preacher," said the husband, "But you just try tying them together and see what happens." This is an apt illustration of love and marriage.

~~Then~~ This morning we are going to be dealing with a subject that many preachers want to shy away from because of its very controversial nature. And that is the subject of divorce. Like the old song says, "Love and Marriage, you can't have one without the other," so it is with marriage and divorce. You cannot speak about one today without speaking of the other.

The authorities were at a point where they were trying to trap Jesus in some flagrant act ~~xxx~~ or abuse against the law and so they started coming to Him at this point in His ministry trying to trip Him up. In our Scripture for this morning the Pharisees come to Him and question Him about divorce. They ask Him if it is legal and right. But Jesus playing it rather cagey and cool, puts a question to their question. Thus He puts them on the defensive and it is up to them to set the groundwork for the argument they seek. So He asks what Moses had to say about it. Moses was their authority on these things and when they quoted Moses, they were probably hoping that Jesus would repudiate what Moses had said. They were probably hoping that He would also say something that could be construed as being against Herod, for Herod had divorced his wife. Thus the stage is set for a confrontation between the Pharisees and the Mosaic law, and this upstart of a preacher Jesus of Nazareth.

The answer the Pharisees gave Jesus was found in Deuteronomy 24:1, which reads "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her; then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house."

Now in the Jewish religion there was two schools of thought. There was the school that followed the teachings of Rabbi Shammai and they were very strict in the following of the law. And there was the school of Rabbi Hillel which was very liberal in its interpretations of the law. Shammai said that this matter ^{of divorce} was one of adultery and adultery alone. Hillel said that if a wife spoiled a dish of food, or burned the toast she could be divorced. If she did a dance in the street, or spoke to a strange man, or if she spoke disrespectfully of her husband's relatives and so on, these were causes for divorce. Thus we can see that because human nature is what it is, the more liberal view prevailed. Divorce for very trivial reasons had become very common.

So what Jesus said in the following verse was in defense of the women of His day. Jesus was interested in having women be treated as people, and not as just a piece of property to be used and discarded when the use was over.

He wanted to put marriage back into its proper perspective. His message ~~xxx~~ is just as timely today as it was when He first spoke it. He saw the cruelty and injustice that was wrought by the Mosaic law as quoted by the Pharisees.

A sample of how divorce was attained is the following: Let this be from me thy writ of divorce and letter of dismissal and deed of liberation, that thou mayest marry whatsoever man thou wilt.

In later days it became more elaborate and read: On the ___ day of the ___ week, of the ___ month, year ___ of the world, according to the calculation in use in the town of ___ situated by the river ___, I, ___ son of ___, and by whatsoever name I am called here, present this day ___ native of the town of ___, acting of my free will, and without any coercion, do repudiate, send back, and put away thee ___, daughter of ___, so that thou art free and thou canst at thy pleasure marry whom thou wilt and no one will hinder thee. This is thy letter of divorce, act of repudiation, certificate of separation, according to the law of Moses and of Israel."

This document took a skilled Rabbi to draw up, and it was proved by a court of three Rabbis and then lodged with the Sanhedrin. So we can see from this that divorce was relatively easy. And from the wording of the divorce paper it makes it sound like the husband was doing the woman a big favor by releasing her from the marriage. The law read that a "Woman may be divorced with or without her will, but a man only with his will." In other words a woman could be disposed of without her consent, but a man could not be divorced by his wife unless he wanted to be.

Jesus said that ~~xxx~~ this law of Moses was laid down because of the hardness of their hearts. He was pointing out that Moses tried to overcome the business of easy divorce and that was what this law was intended for. But instead they twisted it and made it suit their own purposes.

Jesus did several things in this passage of Scripture. First He moved the whole debate about divorce ~~xxx~~ from the realm of is it legal or lawful, to the higher realm of the purpose of God. He laid a deep emphasis on the permanence ~~xxxxxx~~ as well as the dignity and sanctity of marriage. And then He raised the standard of women from being mere slaves or property to be disposed of, to people of God. He gave to the world and to His nation for the first time a new conception that women were persons equal with men. Perhaps we would call Him the first women's liberator.

(Illustration of Dorothy L. Sayers, pg 151 1975 Minister Manual)

Jesus showed that God's arithmetic does not equal ours. He took the question of the Pharisees all the way back to Genesis and spoke of one + one equaling one. We would say one + one equals two. But not with God when it involves ~~two people~~ one + one uniting in marriage. He showed that in this there was to be a permanency. But He was implying and leaving unsaid that marriage was something to be taken seriously.

He was leaving unsaid that those who come to the point of marriage should be mature, and want to make marriage a lasting event. He was pointing out that when adult infants marry, meaning a boy looking for a mother substitute and a girl looking for a father substitute marry, then the only thing that can result is a crash. This is what is still wrong with marriage today. Too many people look upon it as a bride dressed in a lovely white gown traipsing down the aisle on the arm of her father to the strains of Lohengrins wedding march into the arms of a handsome knight in shining armor who will sweep her out of that church into a castle and they will live happily ever after. They forget that it means listening to the strains of an alarm clock that calls the husband to the office or factory, and her to the ironing board and washing machine. Jesus was striving to point all of this out in these few short verses.

But one controversy that has arisen and rages even today is that of just what was He saying about divorce? Does all of this mean that divorce is never right or proper? Well, on this issue as on all others we can take sides. We can say that Jesus was a strict legalist and said "No divorce under any circumstances." Or we can say He said, "It is permissible in certain circumstances." And there is grounds for both arguments. But in all of this we must remember that He pointed out time and time again, that institutions were made for man, and not man for the institution. We must always remember His endless sympathy for people and their problems. I believe in my own mind and heart in the complete sanctity of marriage. I believe that it was made to be unbroken by anyone including the law. But as I interpret Jesus and what He did, I see Him as judging each case on its individual merits.

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
BUTLER, PENNSYLVANIA
FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT MARCH 9, 1975
REV. RALPH C. LINK, PASTOR
MRS. EUGENE STEPHENSON, ORGANIST
MR. RALPH COOPER, CHOIR DIRECTOR
SHARI McBRIDE, GREG BOSKO - ACOLYTES

ORDER OF WORSHIP 11:00 A.M.

PRELUDE MUSIC: "O DIVINE REDEEMER" GOUNOD
"CANTILENA" STEERE

SILENT PRAYER

*PROCESSIONAL HYMN No. 43 "WHEN MORNING GILDS THE SKIES"

*ASCRIPTION - CHORAL AMEN

*EXHORTATION

*CONFESSION (IN UNISON) "MOST MERCIFUL FATHER, WHO HAST
SET US IN COMMUNITIES, AND BOUND US TOGETHER BY COMMON
DUTIES AND SYMPATHIES, WE LIFT OUR HEARTS TO THEE AND
PRAY WITH ONE ACCORD THAT THOU WOULDST SEND THY BLESSING
UPON OUR CITY AND NATION, PROSPERING EVERY HONEST MAN,
SWEEPING AWAY EVERY TEMPTATION TO EVIL, DELIVERING THE
WEAK OF OUR PEOPLE FROM INTemperANCE AND VICE OF EVERY
KIND, FEEDING MEN'S HANDS WITH LABOUR AND THEIR MOUTHS
WITH BREAD, AND SPREADING THROUGH EVERY HOME THY LOVE
AND KNOWLEDGE, THAT WE MAY PRAISE THEE EVERMORE THROUGH
JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN."

*KYRIE (CHOIR, CONGREGATION AND PASTOR)

*ASSURANCE OF PARDON - CHORAL AMEN

*PRAISE

*PASTOR: O LORD OPEN OUR LIPS.

*PEOPLE: AND OUR MOUTH SHALL SHOW FORTH THY PRAISE

*DOXOLOGY No. 551

SCRIPTURE: MARK 10: 1-12

HYMN No. 239 "ASK YE WHAT GREAT THING I KNOW"

*AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH (APOSTLES' CREED)

*GLORIA PATRI

*CALL TO PRAYER

*PASTOR: THE LORD BE WITH YOU.

*PEOPLE: AND WITH THY SPIRIT

*PASTOR: LET US PRAY

*PRAYER AND PRAYER RESPONSE

ENDING

OFFERTORY: "HOW GREAT THOU ART" HINE
ANTHEM: "I HAVE ONLY ONE LIFE TO LIVE" ARTMAN
SERMON: "PIECE BY PIECE, -- JUDEA!"
PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER
*HYMN OF DEDICATION No. 287 "GOD OF GRACE AND GOD OF
GLORY"

*BENEDICTION AND THREE FOLD AMEN

POSTLUDE: "SOLEMN PROCESSION" BLAKE

----- *CONGREGATION STANDING -----

THE LOVELY FLOWERS ON THE ALTAR HAVE BEEN PLACED BY
MRS. ELLEN BAUER IN MEMORY OF "LOVED ONES".

SERVING AS USHERS TODAY ARE: *WALLY FEDER, JOHN SNOW,
MONT MacKINNEY, JAMES MALONEY, STEVE VARGO.

DEACON AND MRS. DONALD KENNEDY WILL REPRESENT COUNCIL
AT THE DOOR TODAY.

NURSERY WILL BE PROVIDED TODAY BY: MRS. JOHN
STEVENSON AND LAUREL STAUFFER.

THE ATTENDANCE LAST SUNDAY WAS 225; WED. - 105.

(WE STILL HAVE A LOT OF EMPTY SEWS ON WED. EVENINGS.)

HOSPITALIZED: MRS. TRESA NICHOLAS, MRS. JANE ANDREWS.

BABY ANTHONY SHAKELY.

WED. - 7:30 - LENTEN SERVICE "JERICHO"

THURS. - BUTLER AREA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES MEETING HERE.

FRI. - 6:30 P.M. - ARC WORK NIGHT - SUPPLIES NEEDED

INCLUDE: STEP LADDERS 5 & 6 FT., ROLLERS, BRUSHES,
DROP CLOTHS, NEWSPAPERS, CLEAN-UP EQUIPMENT, PHILLIP
SCREWDRIERS. WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A GOOD TURN-OUT.

NEXT SUNDAY - BAPTISM OF INFANTS - IF YOU WOULD LIKE
TO HAVE YOUR BABY BAPTIZED AT THIS TIME CONTACT OFFICE.

J. W. HARMON AND KENNETH WEITZEL HAVE TICKETS FOR

GOOD FRIDAY BREAKFAST - 6:00 A.M. - YMCA.

NEW MEMBERS WILL BE RECEIVED ON PALM SUNDAY - IF YOU

KNOW OF ANYONE INTERESTED IN JOINING THE CHURCH

CONTACT THE MINISTER OR PUT A SLIP OF PAPER IN OFFER-
ING PLATE.

DON'T FORGET TO RESERVE AS MANY EVENINGS AS YOU CAN
TO HEAR THE REV. WILLIAM McLEOD, WHO WILL BE PREACHING

AT THE CALVARY CHURCH ON THE DIAMOND, MARCH 17-23

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SATURDAY EVENING. THE SERVICE

ON MARCH 19 (WED.) WILL BE CANCELLED SO THAT YOU

WILL HAVE ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR HIM.

HOLY COMMUNION WILL BE OBSERVED MAUNCY THURS. AND GOOD

FRIDAY IN OUR CHURCH - NO COMM. ON EASTER SUNDAY.

In other word woman disposed of without her consent/
 but man only divor if want 2 B
 Js said: law Mose laid down Bcause hardness harts
 He pt out Mose try overcome busi easy divor &
 that what wat law intend 4
 But insted they twist & made suit own purpose
 Js did sev things this Scrip
 1st move whole debate bout divor from realm is it
 legal or lawful/2 higher realm of purp of G
 Next He raise standard women from B mere slaves or
 property " B disposed of, 2 peop of G.
 He gavy 2 world & nation for 1st time new concep
 that women = with men
 Perhaps call Him 1st women's libber
 (Illust Dorothy Savers)
 Js show G'S math no = ours,
 took quest of Phars all way bak Gen & spoke 1+1=1
 We say 1+1=2, not with G when involv marr
 He show a permancy in marr/He imply left unsaid
 marr 2 B taken seriously
 He lv unsd those cum 2 marr shud B mature, & want
 marr 2 B lasting event
 He pt out when adult infants marry, meaning boy
 looking 4 mother sub & girl look father sub & they
 marry = crash
 This wat still wrong marr 2day
 2 many peop look upon marr as bride dress white
 gown traipse dwn aisle to Lohngrin wedd march, in2
 arms knight shin white armor who sweep out of church
 & they liv happily ever after
 They 4get it mean listenxstrains alarm clock that
 sweep hus off 2 fact or office or plant, & her 2
 ironing board & wash machine & kitchen
 try pt this out these few short vss
 Bu. 1 contro rage yet 2day & just wat He say divor?
 Does all this mean divor never rt proper?
 On this issue as all other can take sides,
 Cud say Js strict legalist & say NO DIVORCE
 Or cud say He say permissable under cert cond
 & room both arguments
 Must remem He pt out time again, insts made 4 man
 & not man for intstitution.
 Shud remem boundless sympa 4 peop & probs
 I Blieve my own hart/mind compl sanctity of marr
 " " " 2 B made unbok by any1 includ law
 But as I interp Js & wat He did, I C Him judg ea
 (e on individ merits
 if take case wom well in Samar/wom have 6 hus &
 He no condemn her
 From this I Blieve we need assume position of Js
 & not condemn peop either.

"Piece By Piece -- Judea!"

Text: Mark 10:6-9

Sc pture : Mark 10:1-12

Js still Sward journ & again on famil terri
 Ly scrip state He on border Jud
 0.1 Smost of 3 divisions Rom prov of W Pales
 Jud name after tribe Judah & terri which liv
 Small area 55 x 55 mi
 Yet, import Js life, born/bap/tempt/betray/tried/
 cruci/resurrect/much minis there
 Jud play very import role Js life
 2day shall C nother import phas Js minis look Scri
 (Illust husband wife no get along)
 Apt illus luv & marri
 2day look contro subj & that divorce
 old song say Luv & marri can't hav 1 without othe
 So with marri & divorce, cant speak 1 without other
 auths this pt try trap Js in act agin law
 so start cum 2 Him & try trip up
 Phars cum 2 Him & ask bout divorce if rt & legal
 Js play cagey/cool, asks quest of them
 Thus they on defen & up 2 them set gr work 4 argum
 He ask what Moses say?
 Mose their authority these things & when they
 quote Moses they prob hope Js repud Moses
 Also prob hope say sumthing gainst Herod, who divorc
 Thus stage set 4 confront Phar/Mosaic law/Js Naza
 Answer Phars giv from Deut 24:1
 (Read this verse)
 In Jew relig 2 school thot/Shammai strict/Hillel
 Sham say no div unless adultery liber
 All say even if burn toast, spoil food, or dance
 in street/speak strange man/speak gainst hus rels
 & so human nature as is, liberal prevail
 Div 4 trivial reason very common
 Wat Js say next vss (read text) say defense women
 Js inter hav women treat as peop & not pce proper
 & not 2 B used & discard when use over
 He want put marr bak in2 prop perspec
 His meassage just as timely 2day as when 1st
 He saw cruel/injust rot by Mos Law & Ph said
 (Illust. divorce samples)
 This docu took skill Rabbi draw up,
 was proved by 3 Rabs & then lodged Sanhedrin
 Can C from this divor realtiv easy
 & from wording divor paper make sound like hus
 do wife big favor by release from marr
 Law read, "woman may B divor with or without her
 will, but a man only with his will."

This not 2 say we Bcome loose wishy washy our Blief3/

But does mean we nots so quik judge others

& we Bcome 4giving in our attitudes

at I try 2 say is simply this:

Marr 2 B on spiritual level or ~~plain~~ plane, & must B liv on secular plane 2

But when sp realm marr made imposs Bcause unfaithfulness 1 of parties,

when brutality makes liv with another pers a pt of fear 4 life & limb,

Or wen happi little children threatened by brute thru alcohol/drugs,

or wen marr cannot B liv in strength & beauty it shud, then I Blieve divor necess thing

This no mean I Blieve marr shud be dissolved Bcause of petty squabbles or imagined hurts.

But I C Js as Bing flexible in teach 2 want very best 4 children

He said, (WHAT THEREFORE GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER, LET NOT MAN PUT ASUNDER)

He stating that man, mean both man & woman, better think seriously about dissolving wat G considers 2 B very sacred

That when man & woman take pledge of promising, "Til death do us part,"

that it pledge that mean just that,

& when this relationship 2 B dissolved,

it better B dun Bcause the diffs cannot B overcome

He say marr Spiritual unity & sanctity of home not 2 B tampered with & taken litely by man.

(READ TEXT, MARK 10:6-9)

Shirley & Ralph Charles Link, Nancy Link, Dale with Lianne his wife, Lloyd Link with Karen his wife
 Jessica in front of Ralph C. Link
 Ethan and Alisha in front of R. Dale and Lianne Link (the eldest son & family)









Ralph C. Link
153 Keck Road
Sarver, Pa. 16055
(412) 352-1103

Born: April 9, 1929, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Married: December 15, 1951
Wife: Shirley Margaret Neill
Born: December 8, 1930, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Children: Ralph Dale Link, born May 11, 1955, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Lloyd Alan Link, born May 28, 1958, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Nancy Lynn Link, born March 15, 1961, Butler, Pa.

SCHOOLING:

Graduated from Perry High School, Pittsburgh, Pa.
June 1947

Lay Ministry School, Penn West Conference of United
Church of Christ, September 1965 to May 1969

Commissioned Lay Minister June 1969

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.,
September 1970

Graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary May 1974

Ordained to Christian Ministry March 10, 1974

PASTORATES:

As Lay Minister: short term, 1 month or less in
various churches 1965 to 1967

Emlenton Lamartine Charge of United Church of Christ
1967 to 1969

Short term in various churches 1970 until Seminary
entrance July 1970

July 1970 to December 1973 Student Pastor at Trinity
Charge, New Bloomfield, Duncannon, Pa., Penn Central
Conference, United Church of Christ

December 1973 to present, St. Paul's United Church of
Christ, Butler, Pa., Penn West Conference, United
Church of Christ

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

OF

Ralph C. Link

I am the youngest of five children. I was born just prior to the onset of the Depression. Our family was very poor. My father was an alcoholic and my mother was a very religious person who was searching for the Lord. During my childhood she did her best to teach me the things of the Lord. Later in life she came to a personal relationship with Him.

I grew up in the Evangelical and Reformed Church where salvation by grace alone was not preached nor taught. I knew all about Jesus, what He did, how He lived, His miracles, His death and resurrection, but I didn't know Him personally.

My life had many ups and downs and all the while I was attending church and striving with my good works to please God. At a very low point in my life when we were deeply in debt and my wife and three children were all ill, I came to the crossroads. I watched a Billy Graham Crusade on television from some distant city and the message he preached seemed to be directed right at me. I wrestled with making that commitment to Christ, but didn't. The next afternoon and evening at work on the 4 to 12 shift I came to the conclusion that I needed to make that commitment to Christ. It seemed like there was no other choice if life was to have any meaning. That night when I came home from work at 1:00 A.M., I laid face down on the living room floor and told God that I couldn't live my life in my own strength and I accepted the gift of salvation from my Savior Jesus Christ. My life has never been the same.

Through several meaningful circumstances I was called by God to serve Him in the Christian Ministry and to help spread that wonderful message of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful and rewarding time it has been and I give Him all the praise for my salvation and the opportunity to serve Him.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

OF

Ralph C. Link

I believe the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired inerrant Word of God. I believe the Bible is the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and it is the final authority for the Christian faith and life.

I believe in one God, who is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is true God and true man. I believe that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived in sinless life, that He performed the miracles recorded in Scripture, that He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, that He bodily arose from the dead, that He ascended on high where He is at the right hand of Almighty God as our intercessor.

I believe in the Holy Spirit and that He comes and indwells each believer at the time of conversion. I believe that He lives in each believer to lead, to instruct, and to convict so that a believer may live a more godly life.

I believe that through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and through His resurrection, this is the only ground for justification and salvation for all who receive Him. A Lord and Savior and to such as receive Him, they are born of the Holy Spirit and become children of God.

I believe water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the Church but are not means of salvation.

I believe in the personal and premillennial and imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead, for the believer to resurrection of life and joy with the Lord, for the unbeliever to resurrection of judgement and everlasting punishment.